
Interview: Gerd Niemeyer

'Industry transforms the population'

Gerd Niemeyer, a chemist from the West German city of Hannover, worked for many years as a consultant on industrial projects in Brazil. Mr. Niemeyer is a member of the board of the Club of Life.

In his speech to the founding conference in West Germany of the Club of Life, in the city of Karlsruhe May 28, Mr. Niemeyer spoke on the theme of "The Interest of German Industry in Development Projects—The Example of Brazil."

The following interview was conducted by *EIR* correspondents Aglaja Corleis and Andreas Buck at the Karlsruhe conference.

EIR: Mr. Niemeyer, could you report to us a bit about your proposed project for the development of the northeast of Brazil?

Niemeyer: I proposed this project at the Club of Life conference in Hamburg, after I had heard about the Mitsubishi plan—not that I see this project as more important than other projects—in order to show how, with the consistent application of modern technology truly huge areas, that otherwise tend toward desertification and total devastation, can be turned, with relatively small means, into productive agricultural terrain. I also wanted to use this example to show how such a project almost automatically brings with it industrialization and infrastructure development—and this means medical care, schools, culture in every form. I have been inspired by what I have seen in São Paulo, how once industry came in, the population was transformed in a very brief period, how the pessimists, who always said that this would take a few generations, were proved wrong. Take for example medical care. In the developing countries, where some infrastructure exists, this is not a problem, particularly where foreigners come in and introduce medical care themselves. It works if the prerequisites are there—agriculture, so that people can eat, and industry to produce and sell. To put it crudely, where there is money to be earned, then there will automatically be a chance for more than a small select group to become educated; universities will be founded where young people can study, so that they will be equipped to deal with these development tasks.

EIR: You have indicated that in the northeast of Brazil there are abundant water resources not far beneath the surface. How large are these resources, and would they provide, in your estimation, more than a short- or medium-term solution?

Niemeyer: I am no geologist. People who understand this better than I say that there is an entire ocean under this large

region, and the experts see the only difficulty in the lack of energy to bring this water to the surface where it is needed. On commission from a member of the government of the state of Pernambuco, I conducted a little study to show how the application of energy could solve this problem. If electrical energy were produced and transported, and if enough pumping systems and systems for horizontal displacement, that is for irrigation, were supplied, the problem could be solved over the short term.

Apart from these underwater streams there is the Rio São Francisco—you know the Brazilian rivers all have very abundant water-flows. There are also plans to build a canal from the rivers to this dry region. But for me this is only a half-measure, since there would then be water in the canal, but three meters away, nothing. The same problem is posed here, which is the problem of the lack of energy.

EIR: Are there people in the Brazilian government who are thinking in this direction?

Niemeyer: For many years there has been consideration within the Brazilian government about how poverty in these regions can be overcome. At the moment, money is being dispensed to alleviate the greatest need. But this heals the symptom, not the disease; nothing is changed, and every year more people emigrate from these regions since they can no longer endure it there. They come to the big cities, particularly to São Paulo, since they have heard all kinds of wonderful things about it, that the streets are paved with gold. But of course they are not trained for the work that they expect to find in São Paulo. The city continues its tremendous growth—every year the city grows by 100,000 inhabitants. So these people have no real chance and have to live in the so-called *favelas*, which you have all seen pictures of, under the worst hygienic and other conditions.

The Brazilian government is trying to do something, but the means are lacking, and there are also, naturally, circles in Brazil itself who resist this, and who talk about an *Industria de Seca*—which literally translates as "industry of drought," which means that there are some people who benefit from the fact that every year the government spends huge sums to alleviate the need of those living in the dry regions, while help by no means always reaches those who most bitterly need it.

The most important thing is that not only this project, but also many other structural improvement projects, cannot be taken on as long as the countries in the developing sector are prevented from doing so, and are forced toward a very steep

recession by the high-interest-rate policies and the other causes we have discussed here today. This is where the real evil lies.

EIR: What possibilities do you see that the Federal Republic of Germany could participate in such great projects?

Niemeyer: Naturally it is conceivable that, for example, an organ of the federal government or a private business could take on such a great project, which would have short-term as well as long-term uses. Short term in so far as the necessary equipment must first be supplied; for example, you want to build a big power utility for irrigation projects. You have to think also about the electric transmission grid that would be required to distribute the energy. This would put our steel industry afloat again. For such a region, about six times the size of the Federal Republic of Germany, how many tractors would be needed, how many agricultural machines in total, to work such an area with modern methods!

EIR: Lyndon LaRouche's "Operation Juárez" document is being discussed in Latin America; it says that if the industrial countries are not willing to cooperate in solving the debt problem, then South-South cooperation should be adopted. How would this affect the possibilities for such great projects, which are to a great extent dependent upon the capital goods of the industrial countries? Would this drastically slow down the development process?

Niemeyer: Yes, it would at first.

EIR: But the possibility would still exist to begin the projects despite such a setback?

Niemeyer: If the North really pulls out completely, what we all fear would happen: that in the developing sector many, many people, millions of people, would starve. But these countries would not disappear; the countries would continue to exist, and there would be people there. And don't forget that in all these countries today one must and can count on the real potential of scientists and technicians in all fields, excellent specialists who could take on such projects themselves. The process would proceed very slowly, but it would proceed.

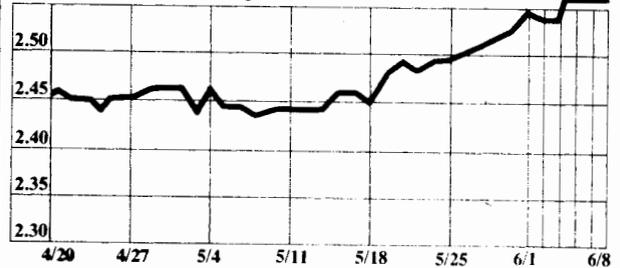
EIR: The real ones to suffer would thus be us, the industrial nations?

Niemeyer: Yes, since we would no longer be needed. If we proceed today from the standpoint that we need markets, where will we turn then? Belgium is certainly no market for us. But if we think in terms of the gigantic regions that we are discussing now, if we were really to see to it that great structural improvement projects were launched in these regions, then an enormous demand would arise. I would like to put it this way: we can do the best for the world, we can do good for others while bringing our own budget into order. That is really the ideal.

Currency Rates

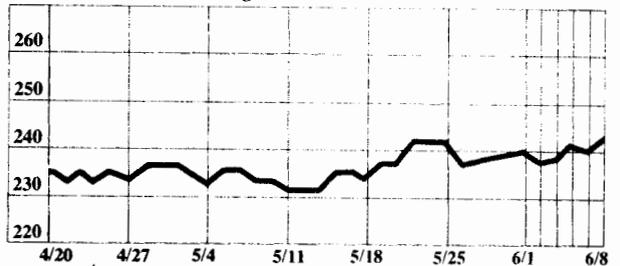
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



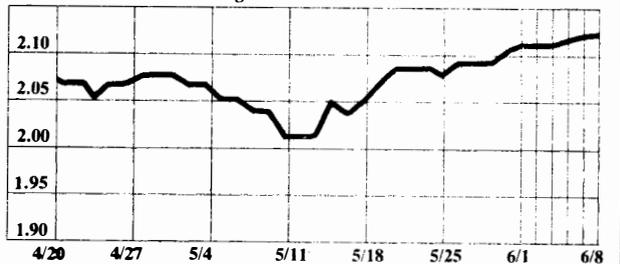
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing

